

The Washi

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The Disintegrating U.N.

It is painfully evident that the United Nations, on the eve of its 20th anniversary, is undergoing a critical transformation. Two decades ago its founders at San Francisco visualized the United Nations as a formidable international agent for the maintenance of peace. Today it is unwilling to face the issue of taxing its members for peace-keeping operations.

Last December when the General Assembly met it was paralyzed by the controversy over enforcement of Article 19 of the U.N. Charter. The United States contended that, under this clear-cut provision, the Soviet Union, France and various other countries more than two years in arrears in the payment of their assessments, had forfeited their right to vote in the Assembly. The delinquents replied that the assessments made by the General Assembly were illegal. The issue was never decided because of fear that enforcement of the Charter would tear the organization apart. The Assembly limped along on a unanimous-consent basis for a while and then adjourned, leaving a Special Committee on Peacekeeping to wrestle with the problem.

The Committee was instructed to bring in its report on the broad problem of peacekeeping operations by June 15. But no agreement is in sight. Instead of offering a solution the Committee is said to be asking for more time, while Secretary-General U Thant and Assembly President Alex Quaison-Sackey are again pleading for the avoidance of a showdown on Article 19. Their re-

port warning of the dangers of a deadlock in the Assembly is indicative of the sad status to which the U.N. has fallen.

The United States too has had to recognize the fact that there is no majority in the Assembly for enforcement of the Charter. Despite their great interest in peacekeeping operations, many small countries are fearful of antagonizing the Soviet Union. So they will not insist on the U.N.'s right to tax for the maintenance of peace-keeping forces. It is all too evident, as recognized in the report of Messrs. Thant and Quaison-Sackey, that the U.N. will be dependent upon voluntary contributions for such peacekeeping ventures as it may undertake in the foreseeable future.

No doubt we shall hear much about this erosion of the United Nations when the Senate takes up the question of consenting to ratification to the proposed Charter amendments today. Foes of international organization may be expected to oppose the amendments as a means of further weakening the U.N. But there is no logic in making a bad situation worse. While frankly recognizing the predicament of the U.N., the Senate will need to guard itself against slipping into cooperation with the wreckers.

The amendments which the Senate is asked to approve stand on their own merits. One would enlarge the Security Council and the other would enlarge the Economic and Social Council in line with the expanded membership of the organization. These are modernizing changes which have nothing to do with the U.N.'s impotence in the peacekeeping sphere. If they are approved, they will become a salutary precedent for other possible changes in the Charter.

It is far more important, however, to check the drift away from the concept of collective security. If the U.N. is reduced to the status of a debating society, for want of courage and a community of interests among its members, the security of every small country will suffer. It is time for every U.N. member to take a sober look at the current drift and to act as if the next crisis to arise might be in its own back yard.